Nelson H.H. Graburn

Man, Beast, and Transformation in Canadian Inuit Art and Culture[1]

This article describes the major features and classes of manlike and non-human creatures of Inuit mythology and examines their expression in oral tradition and in the new commercial arts of carving and printmaking. The author demonstrates how the Inuit belief systems have changed gradually with the impact of literacy and the influence of Christianity. He suggests that the transition from oral to pictorial representation of mythological beings has fixed, and thus limited, the Inuit's conception of these creatures.

Traditional Inuit culture populated the physical and spiritual world with a plethora of humanoid and non-human beings of many different types. Most were superhuman in their characteristics and were inexplicable or uncontrollable, except by shamans. Significantly none were animals, with the exception of a few origin myths which account for certain species having transformed from humans. The major characteristic of all these beings is that they are not subject to very close description nor to systematization in a way satisfactory to our literate culture.

This paper describes the major features and classes of these beings and examines their expression in oral tradition and in the new commercial arts of carving and print-making. Although my own field data provide the basis, other major sources have been examined for correspondences and elaboration.[2]

The major conclusions are: that Inuit experience and belief cannot and should not be analyzed in the same ways as we attempt to do with the Sasquatch, for Inuit reality was based on a different, oral mode of communication, and our academic understanding is based in the literate, two-dimensional externalizing modes; that the Inuit belief systems have changed gradually with the impact of literacy and that the commercial arts express a half-way stage in the materializing of beliefs; and that the reality of the Inuit beings and experience is a question which is best answered from an existential or inter-subjective point of view.

MAN IS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INUIT HUMANOIDS

The many varieties of humans, humanoids, spirits, and transformations that appear in Inuit mythology and experience are not easily systematized. Any attempt at definitive classification or analysis contains the possibility of violating the data, for the Inuit did not traditionally feel the need for neatness or logical closure in their many tales, nor did the multiplicity of individual experiences exclude considerable variation. As Rasmussen found out in his excellent enquiries into Central Eskimo cosmology

> In our ordinary everyday life we do not think much about these things and it is only now that you ask that so many thoughts arise in my head of long known things; old thoughts, but as it were becoming altogether new when one has to put them into words.[3]

This essay does not contain the all-embracing tree-diagrams or componential paradigms that the ethnoscientist might desire. Furthermore, the analysis should be seen as imposing more than is usual with structural analyses a framework which is only partly implicit in the data and cannot be expected to represent the intellectual reality of one *inuk* or group of *inuit*.

Following Eskimo verbal categories the beings under consideration fall for the most part into two non-oppositional categories. Living things—in which the Inuit do not include plants—are implicitly subdivided into two divisions: those which *inu*juk, that is, are alive in the human sense; and *Uma*juk, those which live in the sense of animals. It is the former kind of living, related to the world inuk, "human (Eskimo) being," which is imputed to the array of beings considered here. Another, non-opposite category is that of *turngak*, "evil spirit," which is a cover term for a large number of "beings" comparable to our words "spirits" or "ghosts." These resemble the Inuit only at times and in less tangible ways: they do not love and breathe and eat and die, and they are capable of feats usually uncharacteristic of both *inujuk* ("humans") and *umajuk* ("animals"). Perhaps the most important categories of *turngait*, the plural of turngak, include the familiar spirits of shamans, which may take many forms, human, animal, and non-living. There are in addition numerous beings which most inuit are unwilling or unable to label as either inujuk or turngak, but which are named, known, seen, and share some characteristics of both.

The key concept behind this classicatfiion is the root-morpheme *inu*-which

as we have seen occurs in the prototypical unmarked nominal form inuk ("Eskimo human being") and in the verbal form inujuk ("that which lives" in the human sense). The contrasting umajuk refers to the physical animal aspects of being alive, active, moving, related to *umati* (the "physical heart"). Inuk refers to Eskimo, non-Indian, non-white, people, though the latter two also *inujut* ("live," in a human sense); traditionally the contrast was strengthened by the modifier *inu-tuinak*, an "ordinary Eskimo," though recently this has changed, perhaps due to the influence of whites and ethnic self-consciousness, to *inu-marik*, which means a *real* Eskimo, in the sense of an adult, fully competent Eskimo.[4] Beings that look like an Eskimo may be *inujak*, a kind of human being (non-Eskimo) who "looks like an Eskimo," *inunguak*, a "doll or figurine," and *inuksuk*, a cairn made to look like a person. Of the many other derivatives, the following are important: *inuulirkpuk* ("is born"), which is also used of animals, and *inugait* ("the fingers and toes"), so named because the bones of these digits resemble little people and are used in games as "people" of various kinds.

The concept behind this paradigmatic set is inuk in the sense of spiritual, alive, sentient person, a kind of "soul" often translated as "owner" or "inhabitant" even of inanimate objects. Traditional Eskimo animism endowed everything in the physical and animate world with one or a number of *inua*, which is a contraction or alternate of *inunga* ("its person"), the possessive form of inuk. Such little spirit animators were believed to inhabit everything, and sometimes could be seen as a homunculus, an inch or two long: in living beings these are said to inhabit the joints—and are sometimes shown extant in Inuit art works (see Plate 24)—and in humans, the groin. These inua were the life essences of the world of shamans and spirits and, naturally, the turngait did not have inua for they were not something to be inhabited, they were of the same nature as inua. Human beings, prototypically inuit, were said to have three souls: (1) *anirngnirk*, or "breath-soul," which was "life" and was lost irretrievably at death; (2) *atirk*, or "name soul," the "personality" and name of the individual which was passed from the recently dead to the newborn at the time of birth—such that there is a spiritual identity between the two and between all people of the same name;[5] and (3) *tangnirk*, which in the case of a human being could be confused or identified with the principle inua, whose loss meant illness and shamanistic search or death, and which went to one of the "heavens" after death (see Plate 28).

INUJUT

Inujut are a number of beings in the Eskimo cosmology and experience

which resemble inuit in most ways (they "are alive," in the human sense) but whose definition and behavioural characteristics differ along important dimensions from inuit. Some of them, such as *allait* ("Indians," prototypically Alkongkians, in the Eastern Arctic dialect), *qallunat* ("white people," French and English speaking caucasians, typically), and *inuragullit* ("strong little dwarves," associated with foxes), are still around and experienced. Others, such as *tunit* ("ancestral," Dorset or Thule, Eskimos), *inukpak* ("giants" of various kinds—see Plate 27) and *ikutajut* ("the drillers"), who killed a number of inuit and tunit, are no longer extant, and are said to have lived in prehistory or early history.

Briefly we may tabulate the characteristics of these beings according to whether they exhibit more or less of certain dimensions for which the *inutuinat* (ordinary Eskimos) are the norm:

Name	Size	Strength	Skin Colour	Danger	Intelligence	Dress
inuk (Eskimo)	0	0	0	0	0	0
allak (Indian)	0	+	+	+	0	−(or hairy)[1]
qallunak (White man)	+	−	−	+	0	+
tunit (Strong people)	−	++	+	−	−	−
ikutajuk (Drillers)	0	+	0	+	0	0
inukpak (Giant)	++	+	0	+	−	0
inuragullik (Dwarf)	−−	+	0	+	+	+(or hairy)[2]

+ = more than ordinary Inuit.
− = less than ordinary Inuit.
0 = approximately the same as ordinary Inuit.

1. Although Indians are known not to be hairy these days, some Inuit have noted that they wear flimsy clothes and seem almost immune to the cold, just like dogs, and speculate that some time ago they did not wear clothes at all and were hairy and rolled around in the snow like dogs.
2. Inuragullik are usually spoken of as finely dressed in furs of fox skin, for they are "fox-people," but one model inuragullik, which many Inuit said was realistic, showed him as having skin all over like a fox.

We can note from the above table of minimal characteristics a number of points: (1) there is no clear cut set of organized oppositions which account for these beings; (2) hairiness beyond the human norm seems to be a secondary characteristic except in the case of white people where the hairiness is in the human, not animal, range; and (3) dangerousness, a salient charac-

teristic of most Eskimo stories, is dependent neither on great strength alone nor on superior intelligence, but on irrational, antisocial, or particularly unpredictable behavior: generally, the larger beings are considered less intelligent and the smaller more intelligent, reflecting other Inuit beliefs about the nature of normality and intelligence. We shall return to these and other features later in the analysis.

THOSE IN BETWEEN: HUMAN/SPIRITS

Humanoid beings who are neither inhabited by *inua* nor are they proper, detached turngait are few, but *kapiasuktuk* ("fear-inducing") in the Inuit experience and belief system. There are two major categories; both are rarely seen and are spoken of in awe or disdain.

Ijirak (dialectal variant *ijuruk*) are close to what we call ghosts, that is, the spiritual presences of deceased people, often known and recognized people. These are sometimes called *angirngranirk*, beings which "come home again," referring to the belief that the tangnirk soul may stay around after death, especially near the place of death, and not go off to its permanent heavenly abode. Such apparitions cause great fright for they are fast moving, can play "ghostly" tricks on people, and may indicate that either the living or the dead had broken some serious taboos and were being punished.

Uiirksak and its pair *nuliarksak* are respectively the incubus and succubus said to have marriage-like arrangements with women and men. These beings are greatly feared and it is not known except to the "spouses" whether they are normal human being or spirits. Men and women who do not get married or do not want to get married are said to have these spirit-spouses who visit them and satisfy them at night, usually in small igloos or tents where others do not sleep. Some women even claim to have babies by the uiirksak ("spirit husband") though the babies generally look quite normal. And men sometimes tell of events, such as pregnancies of their spirit-wives, though their offspring are never seen.

We may represent these beings—for which there is no Eskimo cover term—in the following paradigm.

	Male	Female
Living spouse who is a spirit	*uiirksak*	*nuliarksak*
Dead person come back to the living	*ijirak*	

THEY'RE NOT ALL THERE: HUMANOIDS WHO ARE LACKING

Eskimo stories contain accounts of strange humanoids who used to inhabit other parts of the world or who existed at other times: these humanoids often lack something essential to *inutuinak* ("ordinary Eskimos"), and the point or humour of the story usually revolves around the attempts of the creatures to "make themselves whole." Typical of these are the *itiqangitut* ("the people who have no arseholes"), who lived fairly happily by vomiting up their excrement in the way that owls do. However, one of the women married an Eskimo and had a baby. Very soon she discovered that it had a convenient hole through which it defecated and she was jealous. So she set up a sharp stick on the floor and went "One, two, three" and sat down hard on it; however, all her guts spilled out and she died.

Other stories of the long ago and far away include the island of women who lived without men, the people who only had one eye, and so on, and I leave it to the readers to make up their own endings to these tales; all these beings were otherwise human and not combinations of features as are the monsters and spirits which form the focus of this paper. Furthermore these stories are always told in the spirit of fables rather than as experiences which one might believe anyone to have had. While it is presumed that these beings had inua, no one knew for sure.

The following beings, too, were definitely not turngait; on the other hand, informants did not know if they had the full complement of souls. An obvious pair consists of small humanoids who have nothing but heads on legs, with no arms and no bodies. Usually the first, *kajjutajuk* "the one who hammers" is said to be male. He has a big head, perhaps bigger than humans, and wanders about in a brazen manner bashing into things, even through igloo walls: knocking sounds at night, and broken walls and implements are said to be evidence of the frightening presence of the inexplicable kajjutajuk (see Plate 26). The other similar creature is *tunnituaqruk* ("has many *tunnit*," facial tatoos), and is often said to be female, with large breasts on the cheeks and its *nalikka* ("in-between-the-legs," genital parts) just under its chin. This small creature, perhaps as high as a hand, or pairs of them in other stories, is found searching for scraps to eat or making a home in the bedding of tents and igloos. They too are thought responsible for inexplicable noises around the houses, but are not considered frightening.

A category of beings that are less humanoid and perhaps more like ordinary turngak are those which are incomplete as humans but which have their missing parts replaced by animal parts. Though there are many turngaks (see below) which transform into humans and stories of humans who transform into animals, the beings described here are permanently half

and half. Among these are a series of sea creatures that resemble what we call mermaids. *Iqalu-nappa* ("fish-half") (see Plate 30) and *qilaluga-nappa* ("half white whale") are beings, slightly larger than normal humans, whose bodies end at the waist with the tail part of fish or whale. They are potentially dangerous creatures, for you may die if you touch one; on the other hand, they can be benevolent if you help them. A typical story is about a man who finds one cast up on a beach and unable to get back into the water. The man is told that he will receive some riches if he pushes the creature into the water, using a stick of course. Though most of these beings are female that is not always so. A similar creature called *talilajuk* ("the one who waves arms") inhabits the open waters, waving his arms, beckoning to those in boats; it is presumed that something dangerous will happen if one heeds the call. However, these can be of varying size; tiny ones have been picked up on the beach and are not dangerous. It has been suggested that these creatures are not truly indigenous Inuit beliefs but are derivatives from the mermaid figureheads of the old sailing vessels, with stories woven around them by Inuit.[6] This supposition is perhaps strengthened by the fact that the wealth gained by iqalu-nappa's helpers is usually in the form of manufactured goods.[7]

Disappointingly, perhaps, from the point of view of Sasquatch hunters, there are no significant Inuit accounts of humanoid land creatures that have particularly animal-like appendages or characteristics. Though there are such creatures which are reckoned as turngait, that is, spiritual, not really living creatures, and there are other stories of the transformation back and forth of humans and animals, the only half-and-half creatures are the sea-beings mentioned above, and they are of doubtful traditional origin.

THOSE WE FEAR: THE TURNGAIT

Apart from the above beings—and sometimes including some of them—are all the other myriad creatures which inhabit the earth and which are inexplicable. These are generally called turngak, a word that cannot be analyzed to more basic meanings. These beings are unpredictable, have superhuman abilities, and are only under the command of humans with supernatural powers, *angakuk* ("shaman") or other powerful spirits. The very word turngak, or a description or story about them, engenders fear deriving from their malevolent nature and the Inuit pervasive fear of the unknown.[8] Thus "things we don't understand must be turngait; and they are therefore dangerous; thus all turngait and things we fear are malevolent." Perhaps the explanation is better sought in the logic that "Bad luck that

happens to us comes from the spirits [though we might have caused it because we have infringed a taboo]; whereas good luck comes from our own skill and foresight." One may impose on the data three major overlapping classes of turngait, all of which share the characteristics that they are superhuman, spiritual entities which do not have inua (owner-souls): (1) shaman's helpers —which may be members of the next class that have been "captured" by the shaman for an indefinite length of time; (2) free-roaming, unnamed, inexplicable, and unpredictable spirits who are not known to regularly inhabit one area; and (3) known, named, and often greatly feared spirits which are said to inhabit a certain area and behave in a familiar way.

The prototypical turngak is the shaman's familiar spirit, which can appear in any form, human, animal, mineral, or whatever. They do the shaman's bidding, whether it be a visit to the spirit world to ward off ill luck that had befallen the population, or whether it be to roam around and attack some living person either through a dream or through direct means such as illness or fire. As shamans are people who are inherently feared for their powers, though they may be helpful if they are on your side, so the majority of turngait are feared unless they are under one's own control. A few short cases will illustrate the range and nature of shaman's turngait. One woman dreamed that she saw a large *qungasikutalik* ("the one with the long neck," an unknown and frightening animal; the name is nowadays applied to giraffes by those who have seen movies) which made her very ill, so ill that she had to give up her newborn baby in adoption. Later the shaman admitted sending (*ilisituk*) the spirit to frighten her, but he had not intended that it do her so much harm. In another area a wooden house containing a family started to burn down; nearby men ran to put the fire out, but as they approached the house they were suddenly stopped in their tracks by a weasel with some supernatural power which ran round the house until the house was burned down and the people dead. This was the familiar of a female shaman who lived in the area and had a grudge against the family. Earlier that year the small daughter of the household had been bitten to death and eaten by a pack of dogs which acted very strangely. In this case the shaman's turngak was said to have entered into the dogs, for the dogs were all right before and after the event. Shamans' spirits are not usually so visible, for they may only be known by the strange or animal-like noises that are heard when witnessing a shamanistic performance, which usually occurs in the dark—thus the exact form of the spirit is left up to the imagination of the audience.

The second and by far the most common form of turngait is the unknown and inexplicable sighting. Strange noises, sights, and events are usually described as the work of unnamed spirits which are free roaming and inhabit everywhere. These are often in the form of animals or even humanoids which are seen in the distance but which suddenly disappear when ap-

proached—very often the tracks of the being are found in the snow but completely end at the point where it disappeared. Such events are explained that the being was not the ordinary, real *-tuinak* version but a "turngak in the form of ——," as in the case of the weasel described above. Others appear in the house or tent when someone wakes up at night (though sometimes these are returned deceased humans, ijirat). Others may be rocks that move, skulls or bones that have volition, or even strange planes or skidoos nowadays (somewhat akin to U.F.O.'s in Western culture). All these beings are feared for their potentially dangerous behaviour or as portents of disasters, illness, accidents, or bad weather—or as the spirits of shamans that are up to no good. Traditionally the world was full of them, and Inuit best avoided them and sought human company as soon as possible. Occasionally the spirit might ask for something which would lead to a reward if given and disaster if not granted, as in the case of the iqalu-nappa (half-fish) and inuragullit (dwarf) above.

A few turngait were well known for their stable characteristics and their consistent behaviour and locality. These were named and talked about whether they were sighted or not. One with wide distribution is *amautilik*, an enormous man-figure who wears a woman's parka, *amauti*. This turngak, believed by some to have a "house" near Diana Bay, roams around the countryside at immense speeds and steals children which it puts in the pouch of its *amauti* then takes them home to eat.[9]

Another more localized character is *arngnasiutik*[10] ("the woman chaser") only known in areas close to the southern boundary of Inuit territory, near where *allait* frequent. These individuals—for there are more than one of them—are said to arrive in Inuit areas from the wooded Indian land to the south, often in huge unfamiliar non-Inuit canoes. These human-sized beings differ from Inuit in that they wear "fancy" skin clothes, sometimes being described as Indian-like or even like whitemen, their facial skin is very dark, as is sometimes attributed to Indians, and they are often said to have strange eyes which are slit vertically, and open from side to side, not up and down. In addition, they do not speak but have the power of command over Inuit women by look and gesture. Their favorite mode of operation is to enter an Inuit tent (or igloo, but this is rarer) at night, to awaken a sleeping woman just by looking, and to beckon her irresistably outside where she is subjected to sexual intercourse (not rape). The arngnasiutik never wakes the husband or anyone else and the woman is unable to cry out or wake anyone. One widely recounted story tells that the men of the camp saw the arngnasiutik coming down the river in their fast canoe late one evening, so they went to bed and pretended to sleep: When the arngnasiutik entered the camp and went to the tents, the men all rose as one with their knives and attacked them, killing one and causing the other to flee back to the river. It is perhaps significant that

a very similar belief about such beings is widely held amongst the neighbouring Naskapi Indians where it is called *katcimeiǐashu* ("hides behind trees") or other names: However, the Indians fear not seduction, but the stealing and eating of children and others.[11] The major literature sources show the occurrence of many other named, feared spirit humanoids in other areas, but for present purposes these examples from the Ungava area suffice.

TRANSFORMATIONS

The idea of beings transforming from beast to man and back or even between the human sexes is common in Eskimo *unikkatuat* ("traditional stories") though instances of such have not been related by my informants, except in the cases of the shamans' turngait, where there is a thin line between transformation of spirit into animal and the spirit inhabiting the animal temporarily, just as inua inhabit humans and other beings. Some of these stories refer to long ago and account for the origin and nature of certain species, while others are "historical" tales, but, again, it may be imposing too much on the data to separate them into separate categories.

Typical of the first kind are the origins of seagulls and of narwhals. The men were coming back from hunting and found their camp empty of women and children. They spotted them further down the shore and, when closer, the men saw that the women were eating their children (Plate 29) and turning into seagulls which then flew away—which tells us why the Inuit do not eat seagulls and something of what they believe about women. In another story a woman left her husband because of his brutality. After sexual intercourse with someone else, she was washing herself of the sexual smell and braiding her hair in one long pigtail near the top of the cliff when her ex-husband approached angrily. She refused his advances and jumped over the cliff shouting at him, "Tigak, Tigak, Tigak!" ("[you] bull-seal"), and when she hit the water she turned into a narwhal and swam away, and her braided hair turned into the narwhal's horn or tusk—which tells us something about the narwhal and about Inuit beliefs about men. Although we have contemporary Inuit art showing these and other beings in the state of transformation, none of them are believed to have stayed in the half-and-half stage.

Other, non-origin tales tell of the man who marries the fox wife. She used to turn into a fox and leave the igloo every day to hunt and return before him, but he became suspicious because of her smell and spied on her and caught her. Another widespread tale concerns Kautcajuk, an orphan boy who was mistreated and had to sleep with the dogs and eat scraps. One day he was empowered to grow larger and larger, and he came back to his camp in the

form of a polar bear, killed all the people who had been cruel to him, and married the beautiful daughter of his foster parents. Another tale tells of the old woman Qisaruatsiak who used to live alone; she was a poor fisherwoman and used to steal for food. Finally she stopped these practices and gradually turned into a wolf and hunted caribou. It can be seen that these and other stories always relate the transformation to some kind of interpersonal crisis: eating children, quarrelling with husband, an orphan mistreated, living by stealing, and so on. In a sense all these stories are about Inuit who are "ordinary" in appearance and in other ways who resolve the crisis by turning into "ordinary" animals; thus they differentiate themselves from the above classes of beliefs about non-ordinary inujut (living people) and about turngait, who are not ordinary in any sense.

It is particularly interesting that most of these transformations from man to beast are irreversible, with exceptions like Kautcajuk, and do not involve permanent "mixtures." I would suggest that this mythological method of resolving interpersonal crises exactly parallels the customary legal mechanism of *qivituk*, or "fleeing the group," which is a common, perhaps the commonest, method of resolving social crises in everyday life.[12] In traditional Eskimo communities which were without effective legal mechanisms for resolving social problems without resort to violence, self-detachment from the group was common. Though the qivituk person might eventually join another living-group, from the point of view of their community of origin they disappeared—indeed in many recorded cases they were never seen again by other humans; thus, their transformation into an animal species would be a reasonable explanation of their disappearance. Conversely, we might look for other cases where mythological transformations which are incomplete or reversible might parallel other mechanisms of social action in times of crises.

CONTEMPORARY INUIT ARTS

Since 1948 the Inuit of the Eastern and Central Canadian Arctic have been producing art for sale, in the form of soapstone carvings, lithographic prints, and other media.[13] At first these figurines and portrayals were of Inuit life as it was known at that date and did not contain reference to any non-ordinary aspects of the belief system. This may have been due to the fact that the Inuit, though nominally Christian, were still too much in awe of these frightening beings to represent them materially and that the Inuit knew that these arts were produced for white people who, particularly missionaries, traders, and police, looked down on traditional Eskimo beliefs and even

called them symbols of belief in the Devil, *Satanasi.* However, during the late 1950's they began to produce representations of their traditional beliefs about dwarves, giants, spirits, and so on. In some areas this was specifically encouraged by missionaries and others, and in other places it was probable that fears of the immediacy of these beings began to lessen. In a few cases some Inuit were specifically paid by anthropologists and others to represent their unikkatuat in their arts, as a kind of recording of dying beliefs. One of these projects, initiated by Asen Balikci at the National Museum of Canada, resulted in the book by Nungak and Arima which illustrates transcriptions of traditional stories with photos of carvings made to accompany them and which forms an important reference for this paper.[14] In Cape Dorset and other areas where commercial drawings and prints are produced a large proportion of them illustrate aspects of traditional beliefs or contain portrayals of "spirits" which are creations along the same lines as the traditional turngait. So far the content of Inuit arts is restricted to imaginative creations based on traditional beliefs and principles and the portrayal of traditional Inuit life of the past, *not* portrayals of Inuit life as it is today, in contradistinction to the souvenir arts of the first half of this century.

One might on one level see the contemporary arts as forms of expressive culture paralleling the traditional unikkatuat storytelling in fun and fear and episodic nature: that individuals should create realities out of generally held beliefs, with significant individual variation and "skill" in the aesthetic sense, is reasonable. However, this parallel cannot be pushed very far. The creations of visible, lasting, tangible expressions of beliefs differ from storytelling in the same way that literature differs from mythology. Although the content of the stories and the arts bear similarities they differ in the following ways:

1) The artistic representation "freezes" one point of the belief or story, neglecting all the others, in contrast to the essentially fluid, processual belief and the oral mode.
2) The representation makes visible and tangible what used to be imagined by audiences or at best partially glimpsed in the case of turngait, reducing them to "reality."
3) The representations can only show *form* or by metaphor and symbol suggest movement, action, or emotional characteristics.[15]
4) Traditional storytelling was a social, shared expression in which a raconteur of myths or experiences built upon previous beliefs and shared principles and in which the creativity was in the telling; in the new art works the creativity is indeed in the carving or drawing, and the principles are, usually, shared beliefs, but the activity is antisocial in the sense that the expressions are not made to be shared, passed on, embroidered by mem-

bers of one's own culture, but to be finished and passed on to members of another culture. Indeed, after a very few months in any Inuit community I found I was able to identify and comment on the productions of nearly all the artists whereas no one Inuk knew more than a few of his closest friends. Thus the new art form allows for an ever-expanding individual set of creations and the humanoid and mythological beings created are not subject to the checks of a shared audience—only to acceptance by a foreign audience, many of which value exoticism and originality.

5) Above all, perhaps, the new two- and three-dimensional art forms force organization and intellectual closure on the creations. Myths and stories can be open-ended, subject to change, embroidery, interaction with an audience—one which does not demand a logical totality, whereas a material art form requires organization of all the parts—they have to be "put somewhere," "fitted in." Inuit attempts to reproduce the unknowable and the inexplicable to material form have not been successful from their point of view, though they have succeeded very well from our, the audience's, point of view. Indeed, one might say that if they had been able to transform their beliefs into material form in traditional times they would have done so, whereas in fact they were overwhelmingly expressed verbally, in ritual and song, and through a few material symbols such as talismans (*ujamik*).

DISCUSSION: MODES OF REALITY AND KNOWLEDGE

The reader may be wondering by now what the connection is between the range of traditional Inuit beliefs and experiences, the representations of contemporary Inuit art forms, and our enquiry into the nature of the "Sasquatch and other monsters." The point that I wish to stress is that the realities and knowledge of any culture stem from the nature of that culture and its modes of communication, most specifically from the modes and media of communication.

In traditional Inuit culture we have not found much evidence of particular though elusive humanoid Sasquatch-like species. Perhaps the little inuragullit ("dwarves"), the kajjutajuk ("hammer-head"), the tunnituaqruk ("tatooed ones"), the larger arngnasiutik ("woman-chaser"), and the iqalu-nappa ("half-fish") come closest in their various ways: they all differ from humanity in specific ways, such as their size, completeness, strange clothing and faces, and "beastly" appendages. However, they interact with humans and are endowed with at least parts of human motivations and behaviour. More important than these facts is the agreement that none of them are animals,

umajuit. Most important of all are the characteristics of this range of knowledge: there is a continuum of beliefs about these beings which overlaps hundreds of others on many dimensions. Furthermore, these humanoid beings do not, in Inuit terms, belong to any one category of being. Far from being thought of as species of animals, some are inujut, some are turngait, and some the Inuit find difficult to place at all—they are just what they are.

The basic difference between the Inuit belief system and that of Western society is that the Inuit do not look for closure and system. As Rasmussen and others have found, they feel that any attempt to "explain" or "pin down" their beliefs violates the nature of the beliefs. Though the basic principle behind the beliefs is overwhelmingly "the fear of the unknown,"[16] the fears are not reduced by systematization or examination, but by avoidance and compliant interaction where forced. This very much parallels "Eskimo law"[17] which is neither codified nor enforced and in which trouble cases are fled or met with situational and personal strategies; other parallels could be drawn with many aspects of Inuit culture. The different attitudes towards knowledge and reality stem from the possibilities of the modes of communication,[18] and I am particularly attracted to the points of view recently expressed by Goody.[19] The oral mode of communication is inherently not cumulative, but it allows for continuous creativity. Above all, it is not inherently self-reflective, for the "stuff" of belief is contextual and not exteriorized outside of the context of time and experience. The literary mode is inherently cumulative and increasingly linear: it allows for the abstraction of belief out of the context of time and hence for re-examination and reflectiveness. Thus we Westerners are able to ask the question "Is there or is there not a species of Bigfoot?", "What evidence do we need to prove it?", and "Where in our classifactory system would it fit?"

Goody goes further than the separation of modes of thought stemming from means of communication. He avers, as I have already suggested, that our penchant for systematizing and charting of other peoples' belief systems distorts them and even reduces them to the two-dimensional and the static. He contends that

> since the table [plan, classificatory system, chart of oppositions] is essentially a graphic (and frequently a literate) device, its fixed two-dimensional character may well simplify the reality of oral communication beyond reasonable recognition, and hence decrease rather than increase understanding.[20]

Thus one could agree that the attempt to scale the characteristics of the

inujut humanoids, rather than being very illuminating, tells us less than a mere summary recounting of the beliefs as set out for other humanoids on succeeding pages. What it does tell us is that if we are honest with the totality of our data, we cannot construct neat rules of deep structure unless we do it many times in different ways.

The recent Canadian Inuit artistic representations may be thought of as a kind of language of belief expressed in material form, but, if one were to push the analogy with literacy, it would parallel ideographic rather than syllabic or alphabetic literacy. And, as Goody has shown, ideographic systems are a kind of "halfway house" between oral and literate traditions, for although they can fix and store information, they are not subject to the same kinds of abstract manipulations as phonetic systems.[21] In the period of the emergence and florescence of these representational arts in the 1950's and 1960's, most of the Canadian Inuit were already literate in a syllabic orthography which was used primarily for Christian religious purposes; however, this literacy was hardly ever used outside of these contexts except for names and some commercial transaction (with the exception of unique individuals such as Peter Pitsiulak[22]) and, for those of us who have read many Inuit letters from that period, we know that they were mainly phatic and had very little discursive content. Since the late 1960's the missions, the government, the schools, and the various political organs, e.g., *Inuit Ullumi*, have made increasingly greater use of syllabic communication to the point where most Inuit might be said to have moved from the "halfway house" of literacy to full literacy, and many have learned English during this period, too. This phenomenon bears examination as a partial cause of the change in nature, or even the decline as some would put it, of the commercial arts.

In the pre-literate, pre-commercial art period, the small Inuit representational arts—toys, amulets, *pinguat*—showed variety but little originality and did not stray far from themes of common species or widely held beliefs. They were guided by the principle of what Carpenter has called "acoustic space"[23]; they did not have a favoured point of view, or a base to stand up on, they were only minimally representational, showing the intellectual rather than the visual essentials, and contained many "visual puns." While the work of some of the oldest Inuit artists shows characteristics of this domination by the aural/oral tradition, that of most of the younger ones does not. Furthermore, most of the younger men and women do not "like" (understand) those kinds of representations; they think they can do much "better" now. The past hundred years, then, has shown a gradual change in the Inuit communication systems from oral to literate and in their arts from open-ended suggestive to pictorial with closure. The beliefs in a plethora of more or less humanoid beings populating both the physical and spiritual worlds, whose distinctive features did not classify them in a closed systematic way, has gradually given

way to fewer beliefs of more specifiable phenomena and, recently, to a world view approximating that of the Canadians with whom they are in contact.

One may pose ontological questions about the nature of beings in the cultural systems of the Inuit and the Canadians. The phenomenological answer is that if things are believed to exist, they do exist, for there is no other kind of existence. However, this is only satisfactory within a culture of shared premises, and such did not obtain between the Inuit and the Euro-Canadians, at least until recently. Cross-culturally, anthropologists have long faced these problems, but mainly on the intellectual, analytical level, for instance in the Durkheimian tradition of social projections or the Freudian concept of psychological projections. In one way, we may say the question is unanswerable without the experiential, and that experience is a subjective or intersubjective phenomenon.[24] While travelling with the Inuit by dog-sled I became as frightened as the Inuit of the possibility that a particular shaman would send his spirit to harm us because he had a quarrel with one of us—but I am not in the Arctic now: what was that experience?

The dictum that "the medium is the message" may, for our purposes, be rephrased "the instrument of the search will determine the nature of what is found." And the instrument is the human mind, in its particular cultural milieu, with all the technical equipment that the culture puts at its command.

Notes

1. The data for this paper were gathered during field trips to the Canadian North in 1959, 1960, 1963–64, 1967–68, 1972, and 1976. For the most part the data are limited to the Inuit culture of the Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait areas. The phonemic orthography is derived from G. Lefebvre, "A Draft Orthography for Canadian Eskimo" (Ottawa: N.C.R.C., 1958), and has been used in most of my previous works as it is more suitable for use by English-speakers than the newer Gagné-based orthographies being introduced for inter-Inuit purposes.
2. See especially Franz Boas, *The Central Eskimo* (Washington, C.D.: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 6th Annual Report, 1888), and *The Eskimo of Baffin Island and Hudson Bay,* Bulletin no. 15 (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1906); Z. Nungak and E. Arima, *Eskimo Stories—Unikkatuat,* Bulletin no. 235 (Ottawa: National Museum, 1969); K. Rasmussen, *The Intellectual Culture of the Igluulik Eskimos,* Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition (Copenhagen: Gyldenal, 1929), *Observations of the Intellectual Culture of the Caribou Eskimos,* Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition (Copenhagen: Gyldenal, 1930). and *The Netsilik Eskimos, Social*

Life and Spiritual Culture (Copenhagen: Glydenal, 1931); and E. Weyer, *The Eskimos* (New Haven: Yale Univesity Press, 1932).

3. Rasmussen, *Netsilik Eskimos,* p. 61.
4. See H. Brody, *The People's Land: Eskimos and Whites in the Eastern Arctic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).
5. See B. Saladin d'Anglure, "Iqallijuq, ou les reminiscences d'une âme-nom Inuit," *Etudes Inuit Studies* 1, no.1 (1977): 33–64.
6. By C. Gimpel, personal communication, 1968.
7. It is doubly ironic that the soapstone carvings and prints showing these creatures are almost always misidentified as "Sedna—the supreme Inuit sea goddess" in artistic publications of the last two decades. Firstly, the dominant sea goddess, the terrible woman who lives at the bottom of the sea and is visited by the shaman, is not a half-woman, but an ordinary, if ugly and old, woman who has lost nothing but her fingers which were cut off (and became the sea mammals). Secondly, the woman should be called *arngnaluk, takanaluk, niqivvilik,* or by a large number of other names (see Weyer, *Eskimos,* and Nungak and Arima, *Eskimo Stories*), but not Sedna, for the very word could not exist in the Inuit phonetic system: it was introduced by Boas (*Central Eskimo* and *Eskimo of Baffin Island*) perhaps as a corruption of the Inuit word *sana* ("[down] there") or of the English word Satan, which the Inuit had been taught was their major deity. Thus we have a white-derived physical form described by a white-derived word-concept. Another general word for the sea goddess is *tariup inua* ("the spirit/person of the sea").
8. Rasmussen, *Igluulik Eskimos,* p. 123.
9. Known as *kalokpalik* in Baffin Island, Boas, *Central Eskimo,* p. 212.
10. Although most informants stated these were *turngait,* they have some *inujuk* features.
11. See Nelson H.H. Graburn and B. Stephen Strong, *Circumpolar Peoples: An Anthropological Perspective* (Pacific Palisades, Ca.: Goodyear, 1973), pp. 114, 120.
12. See my "Eskimo Law in the Light of Self- and Group-Interest," *Law and Society Review* 4. no.1 (1969): 48.
13. See my "The Eskimos and 'Airport Art'," *Trans-Action* 4, no. 10 (1967): 28–33, "A Preliminary Analysis of Symbolism in Inuit Art and Culture," in *Proceedings of the XXXX International Congress of Americanists* (Rome, 1972) ([n.p], 1974), 2:165–70, "Eskimo Art: The Eastern Canadian Arctic," in *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World,* ed. Nelson H.H. Graburn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), chapter 1, and *Hunters and Artists: The Commercial Arts of the Canadian Inuit* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming); as well as J.A. Houston, "Eskimo Sculptors," *Beaver,* Outfit 282 (1951): 34–39 and *Eskimo Prints* (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1967); C.A. Martijn, "Canadian Eskimo Carving in Historical Perspective," *Anthropos* 59 (1964): 546-96; and G. Swinton, *Eskimo Sculpture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965) and *Sculpture of the Inuit* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).
14. *Eskimo Stories.*
15. See my "*Nalunaikutanga*: Signs and Symbols in Canadian Inuit Art and Culture," *Polarforschung* 46, no. 1 (1977): 1–11.
16. Rasmussen, *Igluulik Eskimos,* p. 125.
17. Graburn, "Eskimo Law."
18. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) and Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
19. J. Goody, *The Taming of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
20. Ibid., p. 54.
21. Chinese and Japanese uses of ideographs have been modified or supplemented by phonetic reduction and two additional syllabaries, respectively.
22. See his *The People from Our Side* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975).

23. E. Carpenter, "Space Concepts of the Aivilik Eskimos," *Explorations* 5 (1955).
24. Graburn and Strong, *Circumpolar Peoples*, p. 52.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful to the Eskimo Arts Council of Ottawa for obtaining permission to reproduce photographs of these works of art from the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative on behalf of the artists of Cape Dorset and from La Fédération des Coopératives du Nouveau Québec on behalf of the artists of Northern Quebec.

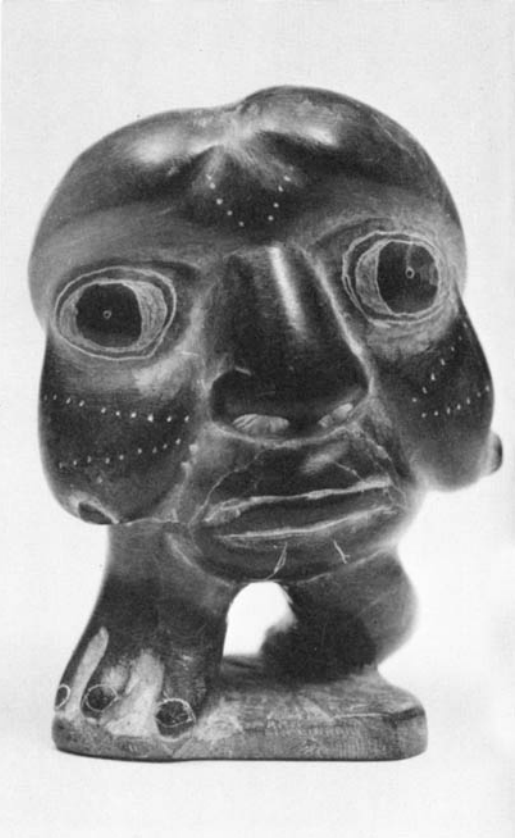

Plate 24 (top left). "Spirit-faces (inua) showing on the knees and shoulder of imaginative figure," by Eli Sallualuk of Povungnituk, Quebec (1967, 10 cm.) Property of the Povungnituk Cooperative.

Plate 25 (top right). "Tunnituaqruk," by Davidialuk Ammituk, Povingnituk (1968, 7 cm) is a small female humanoid with facial tatoos and large breasts on its cheeks.

Plate 26 (at left). "Hammer-head person (kajjutajuk) holding severed head," by Paulasi Irqiku, Povungnituk (1967, 21 cm), is a small, destructive humanoid.
These Inuit spirit-figures are discussed by Nelson Graburn on pages 193-210.

Plate 27. "The giant (inukpak) of Kovik, being killed by an Eskimo," by Charlie Sivuarapik, Povungnituk (1958, 26 cm). Property of Father A.P. Steinmann, O.M.I., who encouraged the Inuit to express their traditional beliefs in sculpture.

Plate 28. "The soul (tangnirk) of a deceased man appears in the Northern Lights to his living friend below," by Davidialuk Ammituk (1968, 45 cm). Property of the Povungnituk Cooperative.

Plate 29. "Woman eating child, transforming into seagull," by Davidialuk Ammituk (1967, 28 cm), is an example of the transformation of human to beast common to Inuit stories. Property of the Povungnituk Cooperative.

Plate 30. "Mermaid (iqala nappa)," by Aisa Aviliajuk, Povungnituk, is typical of creatures which have both human and animal attributes. Property of the Povungnituk Cooperative.